



News Release

For immediate release: May 20, 2010

(10-081)

Contacts: Tim Church, Communications Office

360-236-4077

Smoking inside Washington homes declines by more than 60 percent since 2000

Secondhand smoke exposure still higher in low-income homes

OLYMPIA — New research released today by the Washington State Department of Health shows the number of people smoking inside homes in our state has declined by 61 percent since 2000. The drop is more than double the overall decline in adult smoking during the same period.

The department's comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control Program is on target to meet its goal of reducing in-home secondhand smoke exposure to 6 percent or less by 2013. This new research confirms an encouraging trend. The state rate dropped from 19.3 percent in 2000 when the program was established to 7.6 percent in 2008.

"This is good news for the health of people in our state," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "As more homes adopt smoke-free rules, fewer kids will be at risk for respiratory infections and diseases like bronchitis. So, more kids are growing up healthier, and are less likely to start smoking."

Despite a healthy drop in overall secondhand smoke exposure, an estimated 370,000 adults still report someone smoking inside their home. People from low-income or low-educational backgrounds are nearly twice as likely to report someone smoking inside their home.

The Department of Health is focusing on reaching people who live in rental houses or apartments, which have a much higher percentage of low-income residents than owner-occupied homes. The rate of smoking inside the home among all renters is 12.5 percent. That's more than double the 6 percent rate among homeowners.

Apartments and similar housing pose the added concern of smoke drifting from one unit or balcony to the next. Smoke can enter through doors, windows, ventilation systems, plumbing, and even electrical outlets.

To encourage voluntary no-smoking policies, the Department of Health is reaching out to landlords and owners with information about the benefits of going smoke-free. This includes lower cleaning and repair costs and improved long-term property value. More information for landlords and owners is available on the [Smoke Free Washington Web site](http://www.smokefreewashington.com/) (www.smokefreewashington.com/).

Secondhand smoke exposure is a preventable health hazard. Each year in the United States it causes about 3,400 lung cancer deaths and 46,000 heart disease deaths among non-smokers. In 2009, the Institutes of Medicine released a report finding that secondhand smoke exposure can cause heart attacks. The report also found that smoke-free indoor air laws are an effective way to prevent heart attacks and save lives.

Washington is a leader in protecting people from secondhand smoke, but more work remains. A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 87 percent of Washington homes have a no-smoking rule — the fourth highest rate in the nation. However, 18 percent of adult smokers with children at home report that smoking occurs indoors. [Smoke Free Washington](http://www.smokefreewashington.com/) also provides information on how to protect people from secondhand smoke.

###

Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
--